NEW CENTER IN WASHINGTON TO ENCOURAGE INDIAN ARTS PLANS REBIRTH OF ANCIENT CRAFTS OF LOST CIVILIZATION

WYANDOTTE GIRL HERE SAYS "GREAT SPIRIT" WILL AID HER CAUSE

Jane Zane Gordon, Talented Young Woman, Describes to Flambeau How Her People Will Be Aided by New Foundation—Wonderful Treasures of Patience and Industry Have Heretofore Been Sold to Profiteers for Mere Song.

By VICTOR FLAMBEAU.

THERE'S a sort of Indian magic about Miss Jane Zane Gordon, a handsome Wyandotte girl, who has recently come to Washington. You feel that if you weren't good to her, she might just "make medicine" on you and turn you into a grasshopper, as the odd character in one of her legends did to the giant.

Miss Gordon is full of faith in the "Great Spirit," who has bidden her hither, and with confidence in the American people and the "Great White Father," the President, with whom she has already had an interview. Miss Gordon has undertaken her mission out of pure love. She has a nice little house of her own, a bungalow, on a high hill in Los Angeles, Cal., where she would love to be living now, writing plays, as she has already done with much success, but she has left her home in order to help the Indian.

Few of us realize that we are specially indebted to our native brother. We almost forget that we have robbed him of his lands, the heritage of his fathers, and that he has been compelled to adopt our civilization in place of his own more poetic traditions. We have read in school days Cooper's tale, "The Last of the Mohicans," Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona," or Longfellow's "Hiawatha," and there the matter ended. We enjoy the Indian canoe in one of our most popular sports. The late war reminded us of the Indian, when by his bravery and strategy he taught his white comrades the Indian tactics, new methods of advance, the ambuscade, and Indian tricks of camouflage.

Trails of Antiquity.

Over 300 words of our everyday language come from the Indians: buccaneer, cannibal, chocolate, coyote, hammock, hurricane, hickory, mahogany, maize, moccasin, pampas, potato, quinine, raccoon, skunk, squaw, tobacco, toboggan, totem, tomato, tuxedo, wigwam—some of them, like "tuxedo," are almost highbrow—besides so many common expressions: fire-water (not so useful now as formerly, though still in demand), squaw-man, pale-face, medicine-man, happy-hunting grounds, bury the hatchet, smoke the pipe of peace, go on the warpath, to say nothing of the importance of political terms, caucus, chautauqua, mugwump, and Tammany. Indian heroes and heroines still thrill us: Pocahontas, Pontiac, Tecumseh, and others.

We seldom remember that our railways and roadways today follow exactly the paths, in many cases, trodden out by the Indian ages ago. "The Empire State," said an Indian, "was once laced by our trails from Albany to Buffalo, trails worn so deep by the Iroquois that they became your roads of travel."

Indian dyes contribute to the arts and industries of our day; 'annatto' stains cheese and butter; with cochineal and others, to say nothing of the importance of Indian tobacco, the potato, and the maize or corn. India rubber makes our motor tires. Besides canoeing, other sports we owe to the Indian are tobogganing, snowshoeing, "la crosse," a middle Western game, and raquette, played in South America. Our modern scout movement is built up on Indian woodland lore. Panama hats, Navajo blankets, hammocks, moccasins, dog sleds—how many other delightful conveniences do we owe to the Indian, with his poetic imagination!

Even our daily food descends from the Indian: Potato, tomato, squash, hominy, pumpkin, lima beans, pine apple, custard apple, persimmon, cacao, vanilla, maple sugar, chocolate, cocoa, and others, not to mention, in medicine and surgery, cocaine, quinine, cascara sagrada, and many more.

"As the Deer Runs."

The Indians were natural poets. "The Smile of the Great Spirit," that was their name for a certain beautiful lake. Symbolism played an important part in their traditions. It is delightful to hear Miss Gordon tell a story. In her own tongue her name is "Who-Shon-No," which means "As the Deer Runs." She comes from Oklahoma, from the Wyandotte reservation, a tribe called also "Hurons," by the French, a name meaning "wild boar," from the appearance of their headdress. As Miss Gordon relates an Indian legend, she looks at you all the while with her large, wistful eyes, and you feel the "magic" of it. The Wyandottes are very "prideful," so she tells us, for they were the keepers of the council fires of old, as proved by history.

"In the beginning," says "Who-Shon-No," looking at you with those dark eyes, "before there was any world at all, only water everywhere, a long time ago, away up in the sky there was a daughter who was sick, and her mother and father called in the medicine man." This is the story of Creation which every Indian child learns in babyhood. "So the medicine man said: 'Bring this girl and lay her at the foot of that tree and let her touch the root of it.' Then the parents laid the daughter as they were directed, but they had to dig around the tree to uncover the roots for her to touch, and they dug so deep that they made an immense hole in the ground, and at last the tree toppled over, and the sick girl fell through the opening, which was really in the sky. And she fell, and she fell, and she fell. And the water people saw her coming, the fish, and the frogs, and the other creatures, and they all said, 'What shall we do with this girl? We must have some land for her to stand on.' So the Turtle, who was the best diver, dived down, down, down to the bottom of the sea, and he was was gone such a long time they feared he would never come back. But at last he appeared again, and in his mouth he brought three little grains of dirt. 'Three' is a symbolic number with the Indian, as with other primitive peoples and in religious symbolism. So the Turtle brought in his mouth three little particles of dirt. These were taken out, and when thrown they made a place for this daughter to light on, which was the beginning of Earth. And by and by the daughter gave birth to twins, the first earth children, Light and Dark. And the Light represented the Good, but the Dark was the Evil One."

Chaldean Legend.

And that is how the Indian explains the beginning of things. And in his religious tradition, which is a sacred cult, like the Egyptian or the Hebrew, full of symbolism, he has also a flood. And this was the way of it: The flood came, and the waters rose, and they rose, and they rose. And everything was buried under the waters except the Dark, which climbed a mountain. The Dark really represents the Devil, but in Indian lore is something rather a good friend after all. For as the Devil stood on the mountain peak, with the waters rising higher about him, he saw bubbles coming to the surface, and he reached down into the water and brought up the Muskrat, who was all but drowned. But the Devil warmed him, and held him, and stroked him until the Muskrat became quite frisky, and then the Devil said, "Do you think you could dive again and bring up anything?"

"Yes," said the Muskrat, "I feel good now. I think I could." So down he plunged into the deep waters, and he was gone a long, long time. And the Devil began to think it had been too much for the poor Muskrat, when once more there came to the surface the bubbles. And the Devil reached down again and drew in the Muskrat, still more exhausted than before. And again he warmed him and restored him to life. But the Muskrat had brought nothing back. So he dived down again, and this time he was gone still longer, and when at last the Devil saw the bubbles and reached down and pulled him in, the Muskrat was more nearly dead than ever, and still he had brought nothing.

But the Devil again restored him, and then the Muskrat, feeling finer than ever, said, "Now, hold me up, and let me jump from your hand." And the Devil did so, and this time the Muskrat was successful, for he returned at last, again nearly drowned, but in his mouth he brought three little grains of sand, which when thrown down immediately produced an island upon which they could stand, and which grew larger and larger.

Indian Vestals.

The Indian religious cult does not stop here, however, for they have, also, their legend of "De-Gon-Di-We-Da," a very sacred name, which they seldom speak aloud, because of their reverence for Him, since He was their Saviour, their Christus. And De-Gon-Di-We-Da is associated with Hiawatha, who in the Indian tradition lived in the days of cannibalism, when the Indians actually ate their enemies, if they could catch them.

This happened long ago, in prehistoric Indian times, and De-Gon-Di-We-Da came to teach them differently. He was born of an Indian mother, a "down-fended maiden," as she was called, one of the group of sacred virgins who were always sheltered in a wigwam protected by thistledown scattered thick around it, because no one could approach the wigwam without scattering the thistledown and thus betraying his presence. De-Gon-Di-We-Da's birth was miraculous, and he survived the effort of the Indian maiden's mother, who sought three times to drown him, but each time he returned in the night to the Indian maiden, so he was allowed to live. And when he grew up, he was very wise indeed, and as a youth he traveled and met Hiawatha, who was carrying home the body of a slain man, which he proceeded to dismember and to boil in a pot over the fire. De-Gon-Di-We-Da climbed up and looked down through the top of the wigwam, and his face was reflected in the pot of boiling water, and Hiawatha saw the reflection, and he said, "That's a good face!" Three times this happened, and then Hiawatha decided he didn't want to eat his dead enemy, so he took the kettle and its contents outside to throw it away.

And De-Gon-Di-We-Da came and met him, and Hiawatha recognized him, and they talked, and then Hiawatha formed the Confederacy of the Nations, by which they agreed to live in brotherly love. And to this day the Six Nations speak only very reverently that sacred name of De-Gon-Di-We-Da.

The Indian is a poet. He has adopted of necessity the white man's civilization, but he has preserved, in spite of this, his own traditions. His arts and crafts have been very wonderfully continued. Almost every one of us treasures, or would like to possess, an Indian blanket, basket, or jar. We study them in our National Museum, where one of the finest collections in the world is on exhibition. Case after case shows the arts and industries of our Western friends. Squaws weaving gay-colored blankets and rugs, each with a pattern of its own of symbolic meaning, the making of pottery, hunting, the arts of the silversmith, the medicine man in his snake dance, these are a few of the subjects shown by faithfully sculptured figures.

The Indian likes to make these ojects. It is his native avocation, but he is poorly paid for his beautiful work. Look at our picture of the rare Indian basket, with its intricate and artistic design. This basket sold for $1,600, sixteen hundred dollars, but the poor old Indian squaw who made it received for all her hard work only the pitiful trifle of $2.50! She is an aged woman at Lake Tahoe, Cal. Now she is partly blind. Yet she gathered the grass, dyed it, and made the basket without a pattern, and it required much time and effort to complete it. She had the joy of creating a beautiful thing. But of course it is her occupation, her livelihood, and whoever sold for $1,600 this rare work of art exploited (let us hope unwittingly) an unprotected woman.

The Indian has sometimes been falsely accused of extravagance. But he says, "The earth is our mother. She feeds us. Everybody should share alike. Everything was put here by the Great Spirit for all. The white man offered us a string of beads for our land. We took it. We thought he wanted a path over the land. But when our ancestors went out to hunt and fish in their old haunts, the white man ordered them away. We had sold our birthright. The white man says one thing and means another. The Indian says one thing and means it."

Hunter Was Earner.

"The Indians," explains Miss Gordon, "were always noted for their great hospitality. God gives great things for use. In our primitive state we had no poverty. Everybody had plenty. There were no orphans, because all were children of the clan. We have been accused of letting the women do the farm work. But hunting was a serious business. How many white men today could actually supply their families by hunting or fishing? The Indian had the responsibility of the tribe on him when he hunted.

"The reason the women did the farm work at home was because the Earth is our mother, and woman should be the priestess, she should know how to feed man. But the fiercest warrior was the kindest husband. The food and skins were divided among all. The native Indian peoples had the best of all governments in the world. The League of Nations is just waking up to it, but it is taken from the Indian confederacy of brotherly love."

Again, in recalling the poetry of the Indian temperament, Miss Gordon says, "The great gift of tobacco the Indian gave to the white man. But how does the white man smoke it? Ungratefully. When the Indian smokes, he first puffs to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south. That is not only to allay any evil spirit, but also to give thanks to the Great Spirit. Then he settles down to a real smoke."

"The Osages," Miss Gordon tells us, "are a rich tribe, but they number only about 2,100. Not many Indians have any wealth. The vast majority of the 330,000 Indians scattered about on 200 Indian reservations are very poor. Many are in dire need for the necessaries of life, and will suffer terribly this winter, because there is no work that they can depend on. I have set about to find a remedy for these bad conditions, by organizing a permanent foundation to establish industrial art centers on or near the Indian reservations, so that they may have work all of the time."

When Miss Gordon asked the Indians what they thought of this plan, they said, "Just give us a chance to work and watch us jump at it. That will give us the chance to prove we will work."

So Miss Jane Zane Gordon came on her mission to Washington, where she has already established her "American Indian Arts and Crafts Foundation," incorporated in the District of Columbia, with headquarters at 1901 F street northwest, near the Interior building. She has secured the interest and support of prominent authorities on the Indian, educators and others, including in the advisory committee Hon. Charles H. Burke, Commissioner of Indian Affairs; Dr. Walter Hough, curator, United States National Museum; Dr. William H. Holmes, director, National Gallery of Art; Dr. Mitchell Carroll, editor of "Art and Archaeology." Miss Gordon is executive secretary, and with her on the disbursing committee are Thomas T. Bishop, secretary of the Society of American Indians at Washington, D. C., who is giving his services, and Gilbert Davis, a full-blooded Apache Indian at Fort McDowell, Arizona, who stands high among his people. Two others also in the foundation are No-Po Strongheart, a full-blooded Indian at Yakima, Wash., and C. E. Wentworth, an Indian from Maine, now in San Diego, Cal.

Miss Gordon has absolute faith in her work, and in the power of the Great Spirit to provide all things. She believes that when the purpose, his generous heart will re- white man knows of her splendid spond. She shows letters from Strongheart and others, telling of the dire need among the Indians, all of which might be readily remedied if they had proper employment, above all if it was the work for which they are so well adapted, in which the poetry of their soul finds expression—baskets, pottery, blankets, rugs. The Indian will his native self-respect will be maintained.

Home Arts Center.

"I traveled through Reno, Nev.," writes Strongheart. "I saw a very old lady of the Payutes seated on the sidewalk doing a little basket work and to sell things. A number of passers-by stopped, watching her; some of the so-called white men remarked in a most insulting manner, and laughed at the expense of our poor beloved people."

Strongheart rode out to Reno Settlement. Here he found wretched conditions of overcrowding; two and three families in one miserable shack, children barefooted, almost without clothing.

"One old, old man was there. He was hungry," says Strongheart. "I gave him a silver dollar, and tears rolled down his cheeks. He said, 'This is the first money I have seen in many years. Uncle Sam promised me grub and bed, but I sleep in the dust and I am always hungry.'"

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Strongheart has many more sad stories, which are verified by others, all of which one may read in letters of recent date in Miss Gordon's office. "General living conditions," writes some one of another reservation, "were very degrading, and poverty was visible in every household. Every Indian that we met gave the same story concerning the meagerness and often the utter absence of rations." • • •

The need for a home occupation is emphasized. The Arts and Crafts movement offers this opportunity. "Get the people interested in this big undertaking of restoring the arts," writes Mrs. Rosalie M. Stevens, a Gros Ventre Indian from Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, Mont. "Begin by buying up what they have now. They are hard up and will sell, and if provided with material to make the things they love to do, I feel sure you will succeed." • • •

Miss Gordon believes her people to be among the finest artists of all time. Underneath the ceremonies of the Indian, his dances, his weaving, his painting, his legends and myths, there lies a deep soul expression, occult and not to be understood by all. It is expressed for him in beautiful colors, under which, as with the Bible, there is a far deeper meaning for those who care to study and understand.

A central place called "The Home Arts Center," this is Miss Gordon's dream. There the Indians can learn how to do any kind of art work they individually may wish to specialize in, rooming and boarding there while learning, doing the necessary work required of all who stay there.

"This central art center," she says, "will be the storehouse for all our designs. We shall have samples of all work being done on the other reservations. It will be also a storehouse for goods finished. This will be our clearing-house, the big central base of the arts and crafts foundation. When sufficient funds are collected, research work will be started to collect all designs of Indian art work, ancient and modern, while different art centers will be organized outside, with bright Indian boys and girls in charge, some of whom may have studied the arts and crafts of other countries."

THESE ANCIENT ARTS WILL BE PROTECTED

TOP LEFT—Miss Jane Zane Gordon, the Wyandotte girl who heads the movement to restore the art of the ancient Americans. Right, a beautiful example of native basket-weaving, which a poor old Indian woman sold for $2.50 and which later brought a collector $1,600.

Center—A Navajo Indian family, weaving one of the blankets now famous all over the world for their textures and lovely colors. This group is from a picture in the United States Museum of Natural History in Washington.

Below left—A native woman of the Tewa tribe of Pueblo Indians is shown polishing pottery. The pottery from Arizona is one of the best-known examples of primitive ceramics.

Below right—President Harding and Miss Gordon—the later dressed in native costume for a call at the White House.